Proceedings of ICGPSH 2024 Workshop: Industry 5 and Society 5 – A Study from The Global Politics and Socio-Humanity Perspective
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LC19160

Do Women Have to Be 'Beast' to Gain Power

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Abstract: This paper aims to critique the root of problematic current issue of extreme feminists denying sexual differences as shaped in the long standing misogyny, trying to wipe out sexual characteristics in order to gain the seemingly absolute power. Then, based on Luce Irigaray's theory of sexual difference as a function, the paper examines the underrepresentation of women in society, particularly evidenced by the elastic ceiling encountered in professional environment. This posits that economic autonomy serves as the foundation of power, explaining the cause of radical feminists' denial of sexual differences in order to gain the seemingly 'absolute' power through acting in the role of men, ultimately posing an extend implicit disempowerment of women. Lastly, the paper evaluates the role of the legal system and its defect that leaves women transformation into masculinity the only path towards proving they have the same ability as men, and argues that combination of absolute power of basic right and relative power of suitability needs to be enforced to push gender equality.

Keywords: feminism, sex legal equality, women.

1. Introduction

After the rapid development of the first and second waves of feminism, the feminist movements had swept away the historical traditions and real-world impact of patriarchy, awakened the female gender consciousness and the female historical initiative, and won the legal status of female gender rights and expanded the female influence on politics and legislation.

The first wave of feminism emerged in the late 19th century, focusing on women's suffrage and legal rights, including women's right of private ownership and education. This is led by the enlightenment movement, urging for the basic rights of living. Expanded from natural rights, second-wave feminism emerged in the late 20th century, expanding the feminist agenda beyond to include reproductive rights, workplace equality, and domestic violence, showing the gradual demand of gender autonomy. Third wave of feminism, developed in the end of the 20th century until the modern era, aims to address the issue of lack of feminine power in the workforce that hindered female independence. In the status quo, the increase in awareness of feminist issues has been significantly shaped by the evolution of communication methods and societal attitudes. Social media has emerged as a powerful platform for amplifying feminist voices, enabling activists to share their experiences and advocate for change on a global scale. This digital landscape allows for rapid dissemination of information, facilitating discussions around gender equality and mobilizing support for various causes.

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Yet, the pursuit of gender equality has generated a multifaceted discourse surrounding the intersection of power and identity, particularly in the context of feminist movements. As the direct cause of the rise of feminism was the denial and rebellion against patriarchy, to date, all feminist representative figures started the point of view through the critique of patriarchy. An impediment trap towards female empowerment would be examined to be the extreme feminists promoting the public to seek ‘power’ and equality in the literal sense for women, without critical evaluation of what is justified rights. This leads to the misinterpretation of feminism of absolute female dominance, ultimately hindering the process of women gaining power by adding more burden on women by proving equality through the mindset ‘women could do all the job done by men’, leading to the question: Do women have to be ‘beast’ in order to gain power?

This paper probes the phenomenon of extreme feminism, wherein women often adopt traditionally masculine traits and attire as a means of asserting authority. While this strategy may appear to facilitate empowerment, it raises significant concerns regarding the neglect of sexual differences that define women's identities and experience, further defaulting the perception that traditional male traits define power, and the only way to gain power is through acting in the role of a male, forming implicit discrimination.

Based on Luce Irigaray's idea of sexual difference, this study aims to carefully investigate the ramifications of a rapidly emerging social phenomena. Specifically, in their pursuit of power, women—many of whom are found among the ranks of feminist activism—are either willingly assuming or yielding to demands at work to embrace male traits. This essay seeks to disprove the theory that both binary sexes may be reduced to "neutral states" by suggesting that valuing masculine traits above feminine ones is a widespread type of prejudice that impedes the advancement of equality.

In this paper, it could be broken down into two parts: the first part exploring the status quo of trend of eliminating sexual differences and the mechanism behind the implicit discrimination, second section focused on the defect of current legal systems in lack of clarified promised presentation of women’s power that pushed extreme feminists into the action of acting in the ‘role of men’, and ways to reinforce and change the current legal framework to active real quality.

2. Impediment Trap of Equality: Implicit discrimination against women

2.1. Status Quo: Elimination of Sexual Distinctions to Sexual Neutrality, Female Masculinity, and Power

Currently, with the advancement of feminism, the concept of gender equality have encountered a trap of misconception: women must be identical to men. This has led many women to intentionally erase their feminine characteristics to argue that the neutral state of both sexes is the state that there’s no sexual differences, therefore adopt masculine behavior in order to achieve the seemingly equality.

A case could be shown, as a large number of young women have been encouraged by an increasing trend, that is, to refuse the so-called "service of beauty" on the Chinese Internet, and the 23-year-old Lekind Zhu is one of them, cutting the hair short as an act of rebellion, since long hair would be associated to beauty and femininity.

The concept of ‘Service in beauty’ refer to the group of people who pay a high and sometimes painful prices to purse the charm in mainstream definition. By meaning ‘mainstream’, the extreme feminists to characterize the feminine traits under patriarchal definition, pointing at women who follows the traditional feminine trait as impediment towards female empowerment, as they view feminine traits as subordination to the patriarchal power.

This advocacy of independence had went to another extreme, as women who attempt to wipe out feminine traits would be considered by the extreme feminist would explicitly consider themselves as the only group quantifiable for urging female empowerment. This phenomenon reflects a broader

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societal misconception about what true gender equality entails. In reality, this represents a misinterpretation of genuine gender equality and, in effect, constitutes a form of implicit discrimination against women. The issue lays under the long standing male perspective society, which males creates the deviation of power, and issue further deepened in the legally framework to force women to be masculine in order to have a relative equality treatment[1].

2.2. Root and Mechanism of Neglecting Sexual Differences and Transform to Female Masculinization: Normalized Misogyny

The term “misogyny” is derived from the Ancient Greek word “mīsoguníā”, which means hatred towards women [2]. A more straightforward translation would simply be ‘female contempt’.

Misogyny is “the world’s oldest prejudice”, tracing its origin back to ancient Greece. According to Hesiod, before women came into existence, men were coexisting peacefully as companions to Gods until Prometheus decided to steal the secret of fire from the God which angered Zeus. Zeus punished mankind with an evil thing for their delight called Pandora, the first woman who carried a box which unleashed all evils such as labor, sickness, old age, and death [3]. Under the male-written ‘his-story’, including culture, structure, and power, misogyny has evolved as an ideology which has engulfed the society as a smog which diminishes their site to aurora under the deep-rooted sexual binary opposition. Culture and tradition demean, blame, and resent women because of the physical difference under gender binary, with males claiming the first sex, women the second sex. Man occupies the role of the self, or subject; women is the object, the other. He is essential, absolute, and transcendent. She is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated.

Luce Irigaray identifies that adding on to the men’s intentional disregard and distortion of the difference between the binary sex, women’s neglect of physiological differences also adds an hinderance to gender harmony. In the patriarchal civilization, “the sexuality of women has always been derived from male characteristics and definition. Therefore, clitoris with feminine characteristics is just a castrated penis, often stated there is no fundamental difference between the sexes in physiology, thus female sexual organs are non-sexual” [4]. In addition to sexual characteristics that differentiate sexes, male culture defines gender physiological differences from the perspective of its own needs. Luce Irigaray pointed out the arbitrarily of Sigmund Freud’s theory of sex physiology and sexuality [5] as the justification for evaluating the superiority and inferiority of sexes and draws the "phallocentric dialectics", which demeans women as “inferior, not as developed men” [6]. At the same time, the differences in sexual characteristics were implicated to be the faulty justification of advantages of males, using masculinity to imply active, and feminine to be passive, drawing the conclusion that men are positive and women are negative.

As extreme feminists see themselves defined under a patriarchal society, they are urged to rebel against definition or characteristics of females. This serves as the fundamental motivation under the development of gender binary, wrongly promoting the society to abandon all traits of genders in order to reach a seeming equality. Feminists oppose gender differences, on the one hand, because the male authority uses gender differences as an excuse to promote the theory of male gender superiority; on the other hand, they believe that gender differences are contrary to gender equality and go against the goal of women's liberation. But in fact, the difference itself is not equal to opposition or exclusion, it is only a representation of the difference or difference between the different levels and aspects of the gender everywhere, and is also a synonym expression of gender diversity. It is reasonable to acknowledge the feminists’ urge to push back the patriarchal definition of female of longstanding misogyny. However, by further rejecting all traits of female and sexual differences, women are losing their identity and culture, falling into the trap of agreeing only in a masculine form would the power be gained.

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2.3. Objectivity of Sexual Difference

This brings the significance of gender difference has objectivity, that is, the existence of gender difference is an objective fact that does not depend on human consciousness. It is undeniable traits of gender norms and characteristics are formed under the influence of society with diversity across different sexes, but gender difference is an undeniable fact. Human society is composed of male and female under biological meaning, thus in this term, gender differences are objective, natural and inviolable.

Feminist movements were categorized into the first and second wave of feminism, which aims at women's power and female sexual liberation and asks for gender equality. In fact, the development of feminism has gone through the process from justice to violating the ethics of gender differences. Extreme and radical feminism regards all differences in gender relations as objects to be overturned and fought against. On one hand, radical feminists oppose gender differences because male authorities uses gender differences as an excuse to promote the theory of male gender superiority; on the other hand, they believe that gender differences are disobeying to gender equality, therefore contrast the goal of women's liberation. Nonetheless, in fact, the different itself does not equal to opposition or exclusion a factual and objectify representation between sexes.

Biological differences are the most natural and fundamental sex differences. Acknowledgement for physiological differences is the premise and basis of respect for gender differences in other aspects, as Columbia University "gender differences" concluded that adult men and women not only have differences in the physical chest and reproductive system, brain, heart, stomach, skin and other organs are also different, and even the same disease has different gender performance [7].

Therefore, as physical differences between the sexes, which are objective and natural, and cannot be used as proof of class differences and gender discrimination. how misogyny lead to women.

2.4. Luce Irigaray's Sexual Difference: Trap of Feminism

In the status quo, women's rights have gone to the other extreme, opposing all men, resorting to all kinds of absolute and evolutionary rights, and it is impossible to achieve gender equality.

Luce Irigaray's Sexual Difference states, on the other hand, the true equality lies on the acceptance of sexual differences, as it is not a threat towards empowerment, but an objective fact.

One of the main lethal traps of contemporary feminism is that feminists often fall into the trap of mistaken trap of definition of power and argue that only absolute equality by bringing both sexes to natural state. Feminists pursue the complete and 'perfect' sense of equality, such as employment rights. In terms of occupational opportunity, feminists fight for absolute equality, buy fitting into the jobs that were deemed to be made for men in order to show that they have the same ability as men. However, a woman's situation is not a result of her character. Rather, her character is a result of her situation. Her mediocrity, complacency, lack of accomplishment, laziness, passivity—all these qualities are the consequences of her subordination, not the cause.

Simon De Beauvoir identifies the economic underpinnings of female subordination—and the economic roots of women's liberation [8]. Only in work can she achieve autonomy. If a woman can support herself, she can also achieve a form of liberation. The low sexual economic status is the root cause of women's subservience. If women want to become the subject of social life, they must first become the subject with full employment right, that is, the right to work should be completely equal. For this reason, due to the lack of representation, feminists unconditionally argue that women must enter professions that are seen as suitable only for men's physical and psychological qualities, often through denial of sexual difference to prove the same merit between both sexes.

Absolute equality is absurd in the private sphere. To pursue equality based on their own reality, women should objectively evaluate themselves, pay attention to find their own social position, to

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engage in work suitable for their own, and give play to their own unique values: To pursue equality by giving play to their own strengths, women should base on their own gender advantages, deepen and increase the value identity of the society, further establish the subject consciousness, and achieve gender equality in self-reliance.

3. How to Achieve Gender Equality and Gain Power

3.1. Issue on legal framework: Pushing Women Into Masculinity

The pursuit of absolute fairness in legal equality can often misinterpret the value of equality in law, especially concerning gender equality. Legal equality can be categorized into absolute equality and relative equality, where the latter recognizes the unique circumstances and needs of different genders. This distinction is particularly relevant in discussions about women's rights in the workplace, where legal frameworks often compel women to conform to male standards to gain power and recognition.

Absolute equality refers to the notion that all individuals should have identical rights and opportunities, while relative equality acknowledges that different groups may require tailored approaches to achieve true equality. In the context of gender, this means recognizing that while some rights—such as those related to survival and freedom—should pursue absolute equality, others may need relative adjustments based on gender characteristics.

As argued that economic independence is the base of gaining power, the most explicit method of showing women's dilemma of disempowerment would be through the comparative examination of legal framework, in which women's status does not fit the pre-mentioned definition of power for the extent to which the weight in speech is considered and put into action. This could be concluded to be a defect of many legal system, especially Chinese under equality terms, with the lack of clear pursue of relative equality while preserving protection of absolute equality through employment.

There are only 14 countries in the world which offer full legal protections to women, according to the report Women, Business and the Law 2023, recently published by the World Bank. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden as well as Germany and the Netherlands were the nations offering full equal rights for men and women, at least from a legal perspective [9]. Among those, Iceland is widely recognized as the country with the best gender equality laws globally, consistently ranking first in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report. In contrast, China, while making strides in gender equality, ill faces significant challenges and disparities in legal protections and societal norms.

One of the flaw of Chinese gender quality law face is the emphasize on absolute equality, without consideration of the implicit work done by women and discrimination in work places that enlarged the economic gap. This could be explained by the example of Article 24 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, which stipulates that "men and women receive equal pay for equal work, and ensure that women receive equal welfare treatment with men" [10].

This shows the emphasis on absolute equality as it stresses the equality of working time and job arrangement, yet undermining the true cause of inequality due to the implicit work women hold and purse of practical equality. In the quotation of 'ensure equal treatment with men', the equal treatment refers to equal work done of women to men, showing the emphasis on absolute equality of working time and job arrangement. Yet, this is undermine the true cause of inequality due to the implicit work women are expected to hold at home and the lack of purse of practical methods to ensure equality in promising representation.

According to the Bulletin of the National Time Use Survey, the average number of hours worked by women and men in China among participants in employment-oriented work activities was almost the same [11].

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This means that the paid working time of our country has indeed achieved "equality between men and women", but it also means that women have more unpaid working time in addition to working. This is a false interpretation of equality, as protection should be given in the working condition of women and more representatives.

In China's top 20 domestic companies, 86 percent of executive committee members are men—which gives a ratio of 195:8 [12], and 65 percent of those companies have no female executives at all [13]. Efforts to address this gap through legislation have been slow and inconsistent. This leads to the concept of 'elastic ceiling' illustrates that while women may alive mid-level positions, they frequently encounter barriers to reaching the top leadership roles. This reflects not only the structural challenges, but also deep-seated society biases that reinforce traditional gender roles. Yet, this issue could be regulated through adopting legal framework to ensure women's representation in work force in addressing relative equality, in order to promise economic independence, which is the fundamental step towards gaining power.

For example, the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men (2000) in Iceland mandates equal rights across all sectors [14]. This law has been revised to include measures aimed at closing the gender wage gap and ensuring equal representation in leadership roles, with a requirement for at least 40% of board members in public companies to be women. In adopting similar legal terms to put rigid and straightforward standards of female representation, women no longer have to prove their power through multi-tasking work and implicit unpaid work to illustrate they could have equal achievement that align with men for pursue of power.

3.2. Ways to Enforce Relative Equality and Power

As discussed previously, economic independence is the first step towards power. Ecnomic independence enables women to make autonomous choices in their lives, ensuring a greater security and control over their futures, manage resources, and invest in education, thereby breaking free from dependency on partners or family. Through the comparative examination of case study of Iceland and China, it is clear that the feminist attempt of absolute equality through equal work time or equal opportunities did not pave a path towards equality, but added on to the pressure of women, making women have to do same amount of work as men on top of the implicit work. Through the comparative review, it is clear that the only method to add weight to women's representation in workplace in order to achieve the fundamental step of power is through legal reformation, by setting solid standards of representation to ensure women are not trapped in the glass ceiling and elastic ceiling.

4. Conclusion

Through the examination of a new social wave of extreme feminist eliminating sexual differences to adapt to masculine traits in order to gain absolute equality, it is concluded that this wave is a trap and ultimately an impediment towards sexual equality, as it certifies that the only path to gain power is through acting in the role of men in order to break through the glass ceilings. This concludes an essential mechanism behind the attempt to wiping out of feminine traits, as feminine traits were considered to be in the objective place under the male defined society and long standing misogyny. Through criticism of this method of gain 'absolute equality', this paper explores the mean to ensure and push tangible gender equality, shifting the focus of absolute equality of equal working time and opposition to relative equality, which the latter argues to take the implicit burden of women into consideration on top of ensuring basic natural rights of same treatment, in addition to append a strict term in the legal system to ensure women's role in leadership to break through the elastic ceiling through a comparative review, as economic independence is the fundamental step towards gender equality and gain of power.

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By the critique of self-harming power-gaining method of regard of all differences in gender relations as objects to be overturned and fought against, this study examines the root of the lack of women representation in society, most explicitly showcased by the lack of representation in the workplace. This allows further investigation of different firms and companies to re-evaluate their gender composition, which provides more chance for women to prove their ability. Furthermore, by finding out the most significant player of rejection of sexual difference is misogyny, the study largely contributes to the correction of this new social wave, alerting the extreme feminists that they are falling into the trap of further pushing implicit discrimination upon women, therefore, better help accelerate the progress of genuine equality.

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